

History of Hudson River Use

The earliest travelers on the Hudson were Native Americans and the early European explorers and settlers who used the Hudson for travel and a prolific fishery. As our nation grew, the Hudson became a major commercial transportation corridor, linked to the Erie and Champlain Canals. As railroads and roads replaced waterways for commercial transport, the Hudson became used for garbage and sewage disposal. Recreational use of the river nearly disappeared. The environmental awakening in the late 1960s and subsequent cleanup of the Hudson led to renewed interest in using the river for recreation.

As the water quality of the Hudson River dramatically improved over the last quarter century, demand for recreational access also increased dramatically. One of the responsibilities of the Greenway is to address that need.





Design and Use

The Water Trail is designed for both day users and long distance travelers. For the day user, an immediate goal is to provide launches and day-use attractions along both shores. This is a challenge, since railroads limit access to over seventy percent of the shoreline, including access to many natural, cultural, and historic sites.

Kiosks at 12 locations promote the water trail and provide information for water trail users. To facilitate river access and shoreline use, the Greenway has developed an innovative, securable kayak and gear storage rack, and installed 67 of them at 34 shoreline sites.

For the long distance paddler, there are currently 11 designated camping sites, 3 awaiting construction, and others that have been used on a special-event basis. When complete, the trail's overnight accommodations may also include hostels or B&Bs.

To engage youth in the Hudson River and boating, the Greenway partners with youth-oriented groups such as Building Bridges Building Boats, Floating the Apple and Rocking the Boat, helping to develop facilities and sponsor boating programs. The Greenway has also partnered with high school and college rowing clubs to jointly develop docks usable for both rowing and paddling.

For paddlers with disabilities, an accessible kayak ramp was specially designed and installed in a new Paddlesport Center in Hudson Highlands State Park. It became the prototype for others around the country.



Promotion and Events

From 2001 to 2010 the Greenway organized the Great Hudson River Paddle, a 150-mile kayaking and camping trip from Albany to Manhattan. In 2009, in celebration of the Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadricentennial, the Greenway led a trip 192 miles from Fort Edward to Manhattan.

The Greenway constantly strives to promote the heritage and diversity of riverside communities, improved river access, and the Water Trail. In 2011 they revamped the Great Hudson River Paddle into a more diversified series of events. These include short overnight paddles, day paddles, free paddles, paddle races, and any other events their partners dream up.